

Artist offers students perspective

She doesn't hesitate in sharing secrets of her success

By Grey Perry
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DUXBURY — Every afternoon throughout the school year, and summers too, fine artist Bettina Lesieur shares with young students lessons it has taken her years to learn herself.

"Some artists keep their secrets. I don't feel that way," Lesieur said. "An artist has a responsibility to give back to others so their students can build on what others have learned before them."

Lesieur turned down a full scholarship at the Rhode Island School of Design because at the time she wanted to pursue becoming a veterinarian. That never happened; the daughter of two artists was destined to become an artist, too.

"My father is a working artist, and still active," Lesieur, 40, said. "He was an artist for the Army Air Corps and later taught art at Boston University." Lesieur's late mother was a fashion illustrator. Lesieur has been surrounded by art all her life. Now she specializes in oils, and her works have been shown at the Art Complex Museum, the new Ellison Center for the Arts, the Helen Bumpus gallery at the Duxbury Free Library and other area shows. She



Staff photo/Grey Perry

Artist and pupil — Bettina Lesieur works with her art student Alison Dewire, 9, in the middle school studio.

recently had a private showing at her home on St. George Street, consisting of many works that resulted from a trip to Provence, France last year. She and her husband, Jeffrey Lowell, built a barn in back of their home and she uses the second floor for her studio.

"I like the discipline and structure of working at home in the mornings, and then teaching classes in the afternoon," she said.

Lesieur teaches 8-10 students every afternoon from 3-4:30 p.m. in a studio at the Duxbury Middle School she leases from the school. Students range in age from 6 to 18, and are comprised of about

the same number of boys and girls, who pay \$15 a week for lessons, which includes all art materials.

"We use the best materials I can get through my artist's supply house," Lesieur said. "It makes a difference." Students work in acrylics, pastels and colored pencils on very good paper. "Acrylics make sense," she said. "The paint dries quickly and can be painted over easily if a mistake is made. And the cleanup is easy, since they are water based."

Last Thursday, the studio had seven young girls with two common denominators: they were all friends of each other, and all enjoyed, and are good at, art. Some

had been taking art lessons for several years, and it showed. Renee Phelan, 11, was working on a pastel lighthouse. Rebecca Brackett, 11, had a beautiful landscape going for her grandmother and Alison Dewire, 9, was just starting a drawing.

Lesieur's techniques are simple. Sometimes she would demonstrate a technique that she has learned as a self-taught artist. Sometimes she would assist the young artists over a rough patch. Sometimes she would simply encourage the artists, who all work individually on whatever subject interests them.

While they draw and paint, there is classical guitar music in the background. The studio is full of still life subjects, and although it has north light, there are also many strong portable spotlights to provide just the right lighting. "The use of light is one of the things I stress," Lesieur said.

"Even if we do a group study everyone has individual results. Their work reflects the artist, not necessarily me. That is one reason an artist doesn't have to worry about sharing secrets," Lesieur said.

Lesieur said her proudest moment was when her father admired her work and pronounced that she had "learned to see as an artist."

"That is what I am trying to pass on," Lesieur said. "That ability to see, and the techniques to create what is seen on paper or canvas."